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# REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS

## Advancement of the Status of Women in the United Nations Secretariat in an era of "human resources management" and "accountability": a new beginning?

## Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Advancement of the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat in an era of 'human resources management' and 'accountability': a new beginning?" (JIU/REP/94/3).

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ANNEX

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# ADVANCEMENT OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT IN AN ERA OF "HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT" AND "ACCOUNTABILITY": A NEW BEGINNING?

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## Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| ACABQ | Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions |
| ACC | Administrative Committee on Co-ordination |
| CCAQ | Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions |
| DAM | Department of Administration and Management |
| ECOSOC | Economic and Social Council |
| Focal Point | Focal Point for Women, in OHRM, New York |
| ICSC | International Civil Service Commission |
| IMIS | Integrated Management Information System |
| JIU | Joint Inspection Unit |
| OHRM | Office of Human Resources Management |
| Steering Committee | Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat |
| UNITAR | United Nations Institute for Training and Research |

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The topic of women's advancement in the United Nations Secretariat has been around for so many years that any new study such as this one may be considered annoying. Women are dissatisfied when they consider the painfully slow progress that has been made. Some male staff fear being pushed aside by ambitious new hiring and promotion targets. In addition, many decision-makers dislike being reminded again of this seemingly endless piece of unfinished business.

The determined pursuit of gender equity in the Secretariat, however, is not an onerous burden, but a "multiple-win" situation for the United Nations as a whole. It allows the Organization to achieve the "equal rights" principle called for by the United Nations Charter. It strengthens the credibility and worldwide leadership role that the United Nations seeks in its many programmes for the advancement of women. It allows well-qualified women already in the Secretariat, at all levels, their rightful opportunities for rewarding careers and contributions. It also allows the United Nations to staff its programmes with the best talent available by increasing access to the one half of the world's population that it has not fully considered in the past.

Despite many United Nations declarations and conventions, two decades of detailed General Assembly resolutions, and strong policy statements and targets of past and current Secretary-Generals, a decade's worth of "action programmes" to improve women's status in the Secretariat have been ineffective and have lost their momentum.

These programmes have concentrated on achieving numerical targets of professional women staff. Analysis of the situation has not been systematic and well-focused, but available statistics do show unsatisfactory or poor progress in almost all areas. More importantly, the major obstacles to women's advancement - in recruitment, career development, training, work/family-related issues, and grievance redress systems - have been much talked about, but scarcely reduced.

The one significant area of change has been the strong emphasis by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, and staff in 1992 and 1993 on new human resources management approaches. This emphasis, and a new accountability and responsibility system due to come into effect in January 1995, can be of great value not only to increase Secretariat effectiveness overall, but to finally and firmly achieve the General Assembly's and Secretary-General's long-stated policies for advancement of the status of women in the Secretariat.

Action is needed now to convert the strong policy words of 1993 into firm corrective deeds in 1994. Only with decisive actions can the United Nations finally begin to establish an integrated and dynamic human resources management system. The Inspector makes the following four recommendations as initial, essential steps to build this system and better attain women's advancement within it.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.** The Secretary-General should continue the "comprehensive report" on personnel matters which the General Assembly has requested for 1994 as a biennial human resources report. This report should provide policymakers with a systematic, integrated, transparent, and

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results-oriented assessment of progress and results in managing what is now recognized as the organization's "most precious asset" (paras. 117-123).

**RECOMMENDATION 2.** The Secretary-General should strengthen the human resources capacities of the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), as often called for but not yet acted upon, by creating a small, specialized planning and analysis staff in the Office; enhancing human resources management skills of present and future OHRM staff; and regularly reviewing the Office's workloads and staffing to ensure its capacity and authority to carry out its critical management responsibilities (paras. 133-139).

**RECOMMENDATION 3.** The Secretary-General should greatly increase accountability and followup in personnel programmes through an emphasis on much more substantive data and analysis, and the inclusion of systematic followup of the reviews made by oversight bodies, in the proposed human resources report (paras. 146-153).

The longer-run operational effectiveness of United Nations programmes will be greatly strengthened if its "most precious resource" - the staff - is enhanced by the above human resources initiatives. However, while these elements are critically important to advance women's status, they are not enough.

The "action programmes" for women's advancement have proven ineffective, not only because the many quantitative targets have not been met, but because the underlying organizational climate and personnel processes of the Secretariat have scarcely changed. To avoid a serious loss of credibility in an area where the United Nations wants to provide worldwide leadership, and to finally respond to two decades of General Assembly resolutions on advancing the status of women in the Secretariat, a new results-oriented programme is needed, now.

**RECOMMENDATION 4.** The General Assembly and the Secretary-General should replace the ineffective current women's "action programme" with a new programme to firmly implement existing policies and advance women's status, including but not limited to the following ten steps (paras. 159-170).

1. The new senior Advisory Panel on Management and Finance should regularly review, and actively accept responsibility for, advancing women's status, particularly in senior posts.

2. The Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat and the Secretary-General should resume their reporting efforts with much more emphasis on followup, analysis, and new directions.

3. Modest but long-overdue expert consultant services should be obtained to finally assist the Steering Committee in implementing the above responsibilities.

4. Particularly in light of the continuing lack of a career development system in the Secretariat, the Focal Point for Women should rebuild, or build, a worldwide network of Secretariat focal points and committees to keep women staff fully informed and involved in their own advancement.

5. As part of the new Secretariat-wide system of accountability and responsibility, office and department heads and programme managers should be held fully accountable for implementing established policies for women's advancement, reporting thereon, and taking needed followup actions, as often called for but never yet put into practice.

6. A planned study of the secretarial occupation should be only the first of a series of analyses to improve the situation and prospects of the thousands of women General Service staff, and General Service staff overall.

7. OHRM should certify that recruitment procedures to ensure women's equal opportunity are followed and documented, and review and oversight bodies should also periodically inspect these certifications.

8. The expert consultants should help identify new cost-effective ways to contact highly-qualified women from all countries, who are increasingly available in the new global labor markets.

9. Member States should do their part by regularly submitting women candidates, and by increasing women's roles in their delegations and Permanent Missions to the United Nations.

10. The new programme should pursue diversity training, workplace issues, and full and fair implementation of sexual harassment grievance processes, and also consider new issues such as women's roles in special missions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) has made a number of reports relating to the status and advancement of women in the United Nations and the United Nations system over the past two decades, including three reports on this specific topic between 1977 and 1982.[1] This report is part of a broader JIU assessment now underway on the status and advancement of women through, and in, the programmes of the United Nations system.

2. The present report examines actions being taken to eliminate bias against and exclusion of women, and establish and maintain gender equity, in the United Nations Secretariat. It focuses particularly on the current opportunity to greatly strengthen the status and advancement of women as part of new policies calling for greater transparency, accountability, and strategic management of human resources in the Secretariat.

3. Chapter II summarizes the long and disappointing history of efforts to enhance women's roles in the United Nations ever since the Organization was founded in 1945 (details are in the Annex). Chapter III presents various statistics, both those that are being measured and those that are not, to indicate the major problems encountered and the very slow progress being made.

4. Chapter IV examines the failure to overcome the major obstacles to women's advancement, which are closely related to weaknesses of overall personnel management and implementation. Chapter V reviews these past shortcomings and the new operational initiatives being called for by the Secretary-General, the General Assembly, and staff. The Inspector makes recommendations to use these new directions to establish constructive, transparent, and accountable human resources programmes.

5. Chapter VI then proposes ten steps, within this overall human resources framework, to implement a solid, results-oriented action programme that will finally establish gender equity in the Secretariat.

6. As noted above, this report is part of a larger study of women's programmes throughout the entire United Nations system. The Inspector is grateful for the many ideas and insights offered by officials with whom she was able to exchange views on this important subject, both in United Nations programmes and offices and in the specialized agencies. It is her firm belief that, although this report is directed toward the United Nations Secretariat, the ideas discussed will be of interest and use to other agencies of the system as well.

## II. ADVANCEMENT OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN: CLEAR POLICIES, SOUND STRATEGIES, LITTLE PROGRESS

7. The first sentence of the United Nations Charter of 1945 affirms "the equal rights of men and women". But during the ensuing 49 years, strong words have been followed by apathetic actions and very slow progress. The Inspector has summarized this disappointing history in the Annex to this report, to cite both these policy statements and the still valid strategies that were developed to implement them.

8. A minimal outline of women's status and advancement in the United Nations Secretariat over the past half-century shows:

(a) very significant United Nations system declarations, conventions and world conferences over the years, first on women's rights and then on all types of fundamental women's issues;

(b) annual, specific General Assembly resolutions adopted ever since the early 1970s, which call for decisive action in many areas to improve women's status in the United Nations Secretariat;

(c) sensible action recommendations and strategies put forth by two inter-agency colloquia of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in the 1970s,[2] a 1985 Secretariat "action programme",[3] a Steering Committee for the improvement of women's status from 1986-1991,[4] and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), particularly in reports in 1985 and 1992.[5]

9. Despite all these efforts, there has been little change. Attention has gradually drifted away from the basic issues and obstacles that hinder the improvement of women's status. Instead, the focus is on the pursuit of a series of numerical targets for the proportion of women staff in professional-and-above posts subject to geographical distribution.

10. Even this narrower effort, however, has fallen far behind schedule. The proportion of women in geographically-distributed posts has increased only from 17 percent in 1970 to 32 percent in late 1993, a gain of less than one percent per year. Many more years may therefore be needed before an equitable balance of men and women staff is achieved, although the General Assembly long ago set this objective as a general target to be achieved by 1980.[6]

## III. RECENT EFFORTS: THE "NUMBERS GAME"

11. The current targets for the proportion of women in Secretariat professional and higher-level posts subject to geographical distribution were established by the General Assembly in 1990. The Secretary-General established an additional target in 1992, and several instructions have been issued with special measures to facilitate progress[7]. These three targets, each of which is intended to be achieved by 1995, are:

(a) 35 percent women in posts subject to geographical distribution;[8]

(b) within the above, 25 percent women in senior posts (Director, D-I level and above);[9]

(c) "as close to 50-50 as possible" in policy-level positions (Under-Secretary-Generals and Assistant Secretary-Generals).[10]

12. The Secretary-General's report of 1985, which first established an action programme for women, observed that statistics do not do justice to the many elements that shape the role of women in the Secretariat.[11] The Inspector agrees, and the rest of this report concentrates on the major factors and obstacles to women's advancement and the actions needed to overcome them.

13. First, however, a brief examination of the present "numbers game" shows slow progress in improving women's status and advancement, both in those aspects that are regularly being measured and those that are not. Secretariat officials noted that their data includes some gaps and varying time periods, due to (a) the current changeover to a major new Secretariat management information system, (b) considerable recent Secretariat restructurings, and (c) different recruitment and assignment schemes that have been in force in recent years.

14. The Inspector was particularly struck, however, by the very limited Secretariat statistics on women's status and advancement: much of the reported "information" is only page after page of tedious tables of raw data (usually in tiny type and fuzzily printed). She has tried below to present more incisive summary statistics on significant patterns and trends for the general 1985-1993 period during which the "action programmes" for women's advancement have been in force. Later sections of this report discuss the need to develop and present much more substantive and analytical statistics, to permit more informed decision-making and followup on women's status and advancement in the future.

15. Table 1 on the next page shows the overall distribution of women in professional and above posts subject to geographical distribution, which has been the focus of attention in recent years. While there has been some modest progress during the past decade of the "action programmes", the continuing fundamental problems are clear. **Women are still heavily clustered in subordinate positions at the bottom of the pyramid, and they almost disappear as grade levels rise**. If P-1s, P-2s and P-3s ran the organization, the "equitable balance" which the General Assembly sought for 1980 would now be much closer to being achieved.

16. **Even achievement of the three existing participation targets for women by 1995,** as enumerated above, **is doubtful.** Although some additional, incremental progress will presumably be made by next year:

(a) the total figure of 32 percent indicates that the 35 percent overall target may be achieved, but only because of the large number of women at the lowest professional levels;

(b) the Secretariat, at 14 percent, is scarcely halfway to the target of 25 percent women in senior posts, and will surely fall well short of achieving it;

(c) the critical area - policy-level positions - has scarcely improved, and the 11 percent at 1993 year-end is regrettably much closer to zero than to 50 percent.

**TABLE 1. PROFESSIONAL STAFF AND ABOVE, IN POSTS SUBJECT TO GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION, PROPORTION OF WOMEN BY GRADE LEVEL, 1985 AND 1993[12]**

| | 30 June 1985 | | | | 31 December 1993 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Women | Percent Women | | Total | Women | Percent Women | |
| USG | 27 | 0 | 0% | 7% | 21 | 3 | 14% | 11% |
| ASG | 30 | 4 | 13% | | 16 | 1 | 6% | |
| D-2 | 91 | 3 | 3% | 7% | 66 | 12 | 18% | 14% |
| D-1 | 259 | 22 | 8% | | 243 | 31 | 13% | |
| P-5 | 575 | 43 | 7% | | 495 | 116 | 23% | |
| P-4 | 823 | 166 | 20% | | 707 | 221 | 31% | |
| P-3 | 809 | 260 | 32% | | 613 | 231 | 38% | |
| P-2 | 453 | 199 | 44% | | 417 | 205 | 49% | |
| P-1 | 35 | 19 | 54% | | 6 | 6 | 100% | |
| Total | 3102 | 716 | 23% | | 2584 | 826 | 32% | |

17. Table 2 on the next page shows the promotions of women in the "geographical distribution" group. (Promotions at the Director level and above are not included: however, now that these officials will be subject to performance evaluation and promotion review, one can hope that the Secretariat will begin providing these statistics in the future, thereby adding considerably to the transparency of staff movements at these critical grade levels.)

18. The general policy theory is that women, now that they have been recruited in somewhat greater numbers, will steadily advance up the hierarchy. Unfortunately, this is a slow multi-year process, and **the annual rate of increase in promotions of women, as** Table 2 shows, **is still a relatively slow one at almost all the grade levels.** Most fundamentally, as Table 1 makes clear, **the "pool" of women candidates available for promotion at each higher grade level gets smaller and smaller.** The average woman professional is still centered at about the P-3 grade level.

**TABLE 2. PROFESSIONAL STAFF AND ABOVE, IN POSTS SUBJECT TO GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION, PROPORTION OF WOMEN PROMOTED BY GRADE LEVEL, 1982 - 1993[13]**

| | 1982 - 1987 | | | 1988 - 1993 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Women | Percent Women | Total | Women | Percent Women |
| P-5 to D-1 | 223 | 27 | 12% | 136 | 25 | 18% |
| P-4 to P-5 | 566 | 131 | 23% | 291 | 101 | 35% |
| P-3 to P-4 | 905 | 295 | 33% | 392 | 176 | 45% |
| P-2 to P-3 | 559 | 277 | 50% | 228 | 112 | 49% |
| Totals | 2,253 | 730 | 32% | 1,047 | 414 | 40% |

19. **A very serious problem** is shown by Table 3 below, on appointments of staff in the "geographical distribution" category. The inflow of new women to the Secretariat at the lower levels (P-1 through P-4) has improved considerably over the past decade, although even here "equitable balance" is not yet being achieved.

20. **At the higher levels** however, **new staff moving into the Secretariat are still overwhelmingly men**. The disastrous record of the 1986-1989 period, when only 2 of 66 officials appointed at Director and above levels were women, was only modestly improved during the 1990-1993 period, when 10 of 63 such appointments were women. The continuing entry of so many men directly into higher level Secretariat posts is clearly a major obstacle to the advancement of women into these positions.

**TABLE 3. PROFESSIONAL STAFF AND ABOVE, IN POSTS SUBJECT TO GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION, PROPORTION OF WOMEN APPOINTED BY GRADE LEVEL, 1986 - 1993[14]**

| | 1986 - 1989 | | | | 1990 - 1993 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Women | Percent Women | | Total | Women | Percent Women | |
| USG | 9 | 1 | 11% | 7% | 14 | 3 | 21% | 21% |
| ASG | 6 | 0 | 0% | | 5 | 1 | 20% | |
| D-2 | 16 | 0 | 0% | 3% | 18 | 1 | 6% | 16% |
| D-1 | 35 | 1 | 3% | | 26 | 5 | 19% | |
| P-5 | 38 | 3 | 8% | | 50 | 7 | 14% | |
| P-4 | 87 | 14 | 16% | | 110 | 37 | 34% | |
| P-3 | 121 | 33 | 27% | | 147 | 47 | 32% | |
| P-2/1 | 124 | 51 | 41% | | 250 | 113 | 45% | |
| Totals | 436 | 103 | 24% | | 620 | 214 | 35% | |

21. Several important, related points should be made on this issue of proportions, promotions, and recruitment of professional and above staff, particularly at senior level posts. First, **financial crises and other factors have severely hampered overall and thus women's recruitment** almost continuously since the "action programme" was launched to strongly increase women's participation in 1985. A 1993 Secretariat report, for instance, noted that only 27 people (10 women, i.e. 37 percent) were recruited into the Secretariat in calendar year 1992, as opposed to 129 (44 women, i.e. 34 percent) in the preceding calendar year, because of the "ongoing restructuring" of the Secretariat.[15]

22. This last sentence illustrates a second problem. To meet a target such as 35 percent, one must progress at a rate of 45 or 50 percent, not 37 or 34. Over the past decade, the Secretariat has often "increased" women staff, but at a rate well short of the target: at some grade levels and periods the numbers of women staff have actually decreased. **At the present paltry pace of "increase", it might well take another half century to achieve the overall "equitable balance" of men and women that the General Assembly sought for 1980.**

23. Third, as emphasized from the beginning of the action programmes (see Chapter IV), the role, support, and example set by senior management is critical to the success of any programme, certainly including women's status and advancement. **It is not surprising that the entire Secretariat action programme is bogged down when so few women are at the top levels**, as Tables 1 and 3 make clear.

24. The Secretary-General noted in his International Women's Day speech in March 1994 that four women now head major programmes and funds of the United Nations: the World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). UNFPA, perhaps not coincidentally, has now achieved a proportion of 45 percent women professional staff.[16]

25. Women's status and advancement in the Secretariat itself would undoubtedly be tremendously advanced if the Secretary-General's goal of "close to 50-50" women in the Assistant - and Under-Secretary-General posts were being realized (i.e., 18 of the 37 such posts as shown in Table 1). Even a smaller number of senior women would be most influential if they were in leadership positions of major departments of the Secretariat, rather than in the very few "special assignment" posts they occupy at present.

26. In addition, the 1991 report of the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat (hereafter referred to as "the Steering Committee"), which is tasked with monitoring women's progress, observed that **not only are there very few senior women, but they are distributed very unevenly throughout the Secretariat.** The Committee developed statistics from data in the Secretary-General's 1991 report on women's advancement. These statistics (which appear not to have changed much since) show that of 41 departmental and office units in the Secretariat:

(a) 39 units had no women at the ASG/USG level;

(b) 30 units had no women at the D-2 level;

(c) 33 had no women at the D-1 level; and

(d) 10 did not even have any women at the P-5 level.[17]

27. **The current statistical focus** on professional-and-above women in the Secretariat, as discussed above, **does not pay attention to the situation of the majority of women in the Secretariat**. Table 4 provides such a much broader view, again comparing the situation for women at the beginning of the "action programme" period in 1985 to that at the end of 1993.

**Table 4. WOMEN IN THE SECRETARIAT, 1985 AND 1993[18]**

| | 30 June 1985 | | | 31 December 1993 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Women | Percent Women | Total | Women | Percent Women |
| Senior Officials[a/] | 407 | 29 | 7% | 346 | 47 | 14% |
| Professional Staff[b/] | 2,695 | 687 | 25% | 2,238 | 779 | 35% |
| Language Staff | 1,010 | 327 | 32% | 870 | 304 | 35% |
| Other related categories[c/] | 1,232 | 180 | 15% | 1,090 | 176 | 16% |
| General Service | 8,342 | 4,774 | 57% | 8,208 | 4,589 | 56% |
| Totals | 13,686 | 5,997 | 44% | 12,752 | 5,895 | 46% |

a/ Director (D-1) and above, posts subject to geographical distribution

b/ subject to geographical distribution

c/ includes Field Service, Security Service, Trades and Crafts Staff, and Public Information Assistants

28. Table 4 does not include two significant staff categories. First, **project personnel** appointed for service with technical co-operation projects are omitted. **Women have had very low representation in this group for years**: a recent ICSC report found that at the end of 1991 there were only 125 women (12 percent) among a total 1033 United Nations project staff. This proportion is about average for the United Nations system, but far below the 31 percent women project staff achieved in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).[19]

29. The table also omits short-term staff and staff appointed for a "limited duration". The Secretariat has just revised the rules for these appointments, to better respond to major staffing requirements for peacekeeping, humanitarian and emergency operations.[20] Work is also underway to better deal with the many challenges posed by field mission conditions.

30. The Secretary-General stated in 1990 that up to 50 percent of major peace-making and peacekeeping mission staff were women. This not only opened a "new dimension" for women staff but allowed those on mission and those remaining behind to demonstrate their skills in higher-level jobs and enhance their future career prospects, and this pattern has continued.[21] **Issues concerning women on mission assignments**, both for regular Secretariat staff on temporary mission and others, **are an important area deserving closer attention in the future**.

31. Two groups that are included in Table 4 should be noted. First, as the table indicates, the "other related categories" are a predominantly male group. Second, professional staff in posts with special language requirements, while providing a relatively good proportion of women staff, have been remarkably stable for years at a proportion of about 30-35 percent.

32. As the table makes clear, however, **the vast majority of women in the Secretariat, the group almost totally ignored in recent years by the action programme, has been women in the General Service category**. They represent some 78 percent (4,589 of 5,895) of the total Secretariat women in the table, comprise a steady majority - 56 to 57 percent - of the total General Service staff over the decade, and as a group are more than five times as large as the group of women professional-and-above staff subject to geographical distribution (4,589 compared to 826).

33. General Service staff are the "backbone" of the Secretariat, carrying out critical operational functions. Senior General Service staff have overlapping salaries with junior and even mid-level professionals, but are kept in a separate category. As "office workers", General Service staff operate at the bottom of the hierarchy with little recognition, but are often called on to work well beyond their established duties. Some of these staff have excellent education and experience credentials well above those of some professional staff, but nevertheless have severely constrained career horizons. And modern technology is rapidly changing the nature and responsibilities of General Service work.

34. The 1972 UNITAR Colloquium noted that General Service women have many important problems and grievances. Some of these problems differ greatly from those of professional women and need special study, but others are common problems that should be addressed as an integrated set of women's issues.[22] The Steering Committee observed in its most recent report of 1991 that it had made quite specific recommendations in 1986, which the Secretary-General had approved, relating to restructuring/remedies for the secretarial occupation, opportunities for movement to the professional category, and studies of examination processes. However, little further action had been taken.[23] The Inspector believes that **this neglect of women General Service staff is a major defect of the current action programmes that must be remedied**.

35. The only doorway through which General Service staff can presently advance to the professional category is the "G to P" examination system. (In contrast, Field Service staff, for instance, can take the competitive examination and, at higher levels, can be directly converted to the professional category). This examination has a good record in the proportion of successful women candidates (averaging about 60 percent) in recent years. Unfortunately, the overall constraints on recruitment have shut this doorway almost tight, producing only about 20 successful candidates each year, including an average 12 women. Twelve posts represent a very small target of opportunity for those thousands of women General Service staff who would like a decent chance to move up.

36. Three final, significant statistical dimensions should be noted. **Identifying the proportions of women in individual departments and offices, and holding senior managers accountable** for the results they have achieved, has regularly been cited as a critical element in improving women's status.[24] But this **is not being systematically and transparently done**. The last analysis, in 1991, noted that 19 departments and offices had over 30 percent women but 22 departments did not, with the bottom 12 ranging down from 19 to 0 percent.[25] More importantly, evidence of any actual "monitoring" of the performance of heads of departments and offices - followup actions to establish their specific accountability, analyze problems, and ensure corrective actions - is very hard to find in the various status reports.

37. Second, the representation of **women from different regions** in posts subject to geographical distribution continues to be quite uneven. As of June 1993, 76 Member States had no women in these posts (although 23 are new Members). But regional variations around the average figure of 31 percent are still considerable, with **several regions already above the 35 percent target but others far below**:

Africa: 74 women of 424 staff, or 17 percent;

Asia and Pacific: 163 of 415 staff, or 39 percent;

Eastern Europe: 21 of 237 staff, or 9 percent;

Western Europe: 204 of 608 staff, or 34 percent;

Latin America: 78 of 222 staff, or 35 percent;

Middle East: 29 of 132 staff, or 22 percent;

North America/Caribbean: 228 of 508 staff, or 45 percent;

and Others: 7 of 27 staff, or 26 percent.[26]

38. Third, **Member States** need also to set a strong example at the United Nations in advancing the General Assembly's objectives, but their **performance has not been much better than that of the Secretariat**. The UNITAR colloquia in the 1970s reported that women comprised only about 9 percent of General Assembly delegations and 12 percent of permanent mission staffs in New York.[27] These types of statistics have almost disappeared ever since, but the Secretary-General did note in early 1994 that only 8 of 184 Member State missions in New York had women serving as head or acting head of mission.[28]

39. **In summary, all these statistics are discouraging and provide a picture of an apathetic and indecisive programme**. The Steering Committee, in its last full report in December 1991, urged special measures and concluded that

> ".. it is clear from the data that the current rate of participation in the Secretariat by women falls dramatically short of the standards set forth in Article 8 of the Charter. After 46 years of recruitment, assignment and promotion procedures which should have been "gender-blind", the Secretariat has failed to acquit its obligations pursuant to the Charter...".[29]

40. Three years later, the Inspector regrets that this sharply negative assessment still applies, in spite of various renewed efforts. Progress has been too limited and efforts too narrowly focused to achieve overall gender equity at any time in the near future. Chapter IV of this report discusses the "whys" of this failure of implementation, and Chapters V and VI explore what actions can be taken to finally and decisively change the situation for the better.

## IV. THE CONTINUING MAJOR OBSTACLES

41. By far the best Secretariat report on improving women's status was the initial Secretary-General's report of 1985. Citing the 15 years of "extensive and detailed legislation" covering "virtually every aspect of personnel policy" affecting women's status, the report asked

> "What has kept the United Nations Secretariat from achieving most of the goals set by the General Assembly?"

42. In response, the report cited the way that various parties consistently shifted the responsibility onto each other, and the need for attitudinal changes, management commitment, and concerted action. The report then presented an action programme, based on extensive consultations and analysis of the main problem areas by a newly appointed Co-ordinator for the Improvement of the Status of Women. This action programme sought to overcome the main obstacles through work plans in five areas, which would create a "framework for change" for women's advancement.[30]

43. Although the action programme optimistically hoped for prompt corrective actions, the effort has continued slowly on. A consultant's assessment in 1992, which led to formulation of a new action programme extending through 1995, confirmed that "many" of the obstacles identified in 1985 still existed.[31]

44. This Chapter summarizes the actions that the 1985 report called for in the five areas, and briefly assesses subsequent developments. The assessment shows a clear pattern. Almost another full decade has passed, but the 1985 obstacles still remain to be overcome. The failure, however, has occurred not only because of weak implementation of the women's action programmes, but also because the Secretariat has made little progress in overall human resources planning and management.

### A. Recruitment

45. The 1985 Secretary-General's report noted that recent recruitment of women had scarcely been sufficient to maintain existing percentages of women staff, let alone increase them. Some departments and occupations, and countries and regions, also had very low proportions of women. Most importantly, past experience had shown that new recruitment tactics and numerical targets were not sufficient, since successful recruitment depended largely on the institutional climate and top management commitment within the Secretariat. Although the action programme went on to concentrate on technical measures and numerical targets, it did emphasize that

> "To obtain tangible results, it is essential to establish the responsibility and define the accountability of those who are involved in the process of bringing women into the organization and shaping their careers".[32]

46. A 1971 JIU report on personnel problems cited a "recruitment crisis" in the United Nations Secretariat, marked by a high level of vacancies, confusion about needs for generalist versus specialist staff (and a strong tendency to settle for recruitment of people with just "a" university degree and some language skills), and much uncertainty and skepticism about recruiting and using modern management expertise. The report explored

in much detail such corrective concepts as vocational groups, more publicity for vacancies, active candidate searches, relevant job descriptions, junior competitive examinations, staff training, competence and qualifications, and long-range recruitment planning and forecasting.[33] During the 1970s considerable efforts were made to pursue these reforms.

47. Unfortunately, the situation seems to have changed little in the intervening decades. In 1989 a long-time observer of United Nations personnel activities (and the author of the above JIU report) stated that, despite (a) progress in a few subareas, (b) General Assembly resolutions calling for objective recruitment methods at all grade levels, and (c) the obvious need for a United Nations Secretariat recruitment policy, "no such policy exists".[34]

48. In a 1990 book, two former, long-time United Nations senior officials urged the Organization to shift policies, particularly among its leadership, to systematically seek out the best possible men and women worldwide to lead the system, with far greater attention to the nature of the jobs to be done and the qualifications needed to do them.[35]

49. The continuing lack of clear recruitment aims, policy, and criteria contradicts the recommendations of the "Group of 18" experts in 1986 that the Secretary-General should ensure that "the selection of staff is done strictly in accordance with the principles of the Charter" and that personnel management "must be based on clear, coherent and transparent rules".[36] It also contrasts sharply with strong new policy guidance issued in 1993 to revitalize placement and promotion procedures for United Nations staff (see following section).

50. In the absence of clearly-stated and transparent policies, decisions in an organization are usually made on subjective criteria or the continuation of past practices. Many internal and external criticisms have been made of an "old boy network" in the United Nations Secretariat (see next section), and of the continuing failure to significantly increase the number of professional women staff despite the special recruiting arrangements noted in Chapter III. It seems clear that United Nations recruitment continues to be a terra incognita in which people are recruited into the organization in various vague ways.

51. The present recruiting process seems dominated by an outdated organizational culture and "non-transparent" administrative processes. There is little evidence of a rigorous selection process to best fill staff posts with people who meet the requirements for "the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity", as required by article 101 of the United Nations Charter. This "old boy" process obviously diminishes rather than ensures equal opportunities for the identification and employment of well-qualified women.

52. Because of concerns expressed during the General Assembly sessions in 1992 and 1993 about the actual functioning of Secretariat recruitment efforts in practice, the JIU is undertaking in its 1994 work programme an inspection of the application of United Nations recruitment, placement and promotion policies.

### B. Career development

53. The 1985 report on improving women's status stated that low promotion rates for women were an incomplete indicator of career development opportunities provided to women. In fact, career development had to begin with such things as competent

supervision, mentoring, training, rotation, and progressively challenging assignments. The Secretary-General concluded that this process, controlled mainly by the departments throughout the Organization, "appears in many instances to favour the career needs of men." The report also found the sense of career stagnation to be particularly acute in the General Service category, where many women were blocked in occupations with low grade ceilings.

54. The lack of women's advancement, the report continued, had its roots both in women's confinement to "service-oriented" occupations (primarily administrative), and in the attitudes of supervisors who gave more consideration to men's careers than to women's. These attitudes could be improved somewhat through training. However, the crucial factor to guide the behaviour of these supervisors would be the positive example set by heads of departments and offices in enhancing women's participation and opportunities.

55. The work plan of the action programme presented steps intended to address career stagnation and inadequate placement affecting women in the General Service, as well as "virtually every aspect" of the process whereby women are prepared for additional responsibilities in the Secretariat. It emphasized, however, that priority must be given to implementing the career development system being developed by the Office of Personnel Services, which should fully utilize the potential of women staff and increase their career opportunities.[37]

56. In retrospect, "career development" has to be considered one of the most disappointing administrative policy efforts in United Nations history. The intent to establish a comprehensive career development system was announced with considerable fanfare in 1978, again in 1983, and again in 1985 (as noted above). Yet the General Assembly was forced in 1989 to call on the Secretary-General once again

> "to complete...the development of a comprehensive career development plan for all staff that allows for fair and transparent post-bidding throughout the Secretariat..., ensures adequate, equitable and transparent promotion procedures and recognizes merit through a rational performance evaluation and reporting system".[38]

57. However, it was only in late 1992 that a Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly appeared. Noting that the intent to develop a career development system had first been announced in 1978, and that the last progress report had been made in 1984, the 1992 report concluded rather casually that efforts had been "going on for sometime". It stated that these past efforts indicated the Secretariat's commitment to career development as an "indispensable strategy" for human resources management. The report went on to state, however, that the entire concept of career development needed now to be rethought "if a viable career development system was to be established".

58. The 1992 report stressed the critical importance of a dynamic, responsive, and participative career development system to fully develop staff potentials. It identified major system components (almost all of which the 1971 JIU report on personnel problems had already discussed). It stated that Secretariat efforts must adopt "a long-term approach", working "phase by phase" through a few initial "pilot projects". The Secretary-General promised progress reporting to the General Assembly beginning in 1994: however,

the Inspector notes that even the pilot projects which an "implementation plan" chart scheduled for attainment by the end of 1993 appear to be still largely incomplete.[39] Thus, this essential programme need continues unfulfilled, and implementation of a career development system stretches out further and further into an indeterminate future.

59. A major component of career development is promotion processes. The "Group of 18" experts had called in 1986 for "strict and clear criteria ... for the promotion of staff at all levels", including a review of the functions and composition of appointment and promotion bodies to secure "fairness and objectivity" in the management of these two functions.[40]

60. In November 1993 the Secretary-General did finally announce impressive new policy guidance on placement and promotion. It stated that the unprecedented demands on the United Nations require greater flexibility, streamlining, and a system that can "fill vacancies with the best qualified candidates with a minimum of delay", consistent with full and fair consideration of all staff. Accordingly, a new placement and promotion system was established with immediate effect, whose purpose "is to increase the transparency of the placement and promotion processes, which should reward staff for competence, creativity, versatility and, increasingly, mobility".[41]

61. The new system policies remain, of course, to be implemented, and the Inspector wishes to note two early complications that indicate continuing transparency problems. First, the guidance is issued in three different documents[42] (with two additional "implementing" documents). This is not only inherently confusing and often criticized (see section D. following), but also masks inconsistencies.

62. For example, the administrative instruction emphasizes the Charter criteria of "the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity" as paramount, and lists some fifteen specific qualification elements for review, of which seniority is only one.[43] The information circular, however, contains a detailed table of minimum seniority in grade required at each professional level.[44] This shows the continued dominance of "seniority factors" in the new system. It also still penalizes women: even with fully accelerated promotions, the very "best and brightest" women will still have to wait a full decade to move from P-2 to contention for a D-1 post.

63. Second, another instruction cited in the above administrative instruction states, properly, that extensive and carefully-documented efforts should be made to seek well-qualified women candidates, especially in departments and offices with lower proportions of women. It also states that male recruitment can begin only after a post has been vacant for 12 months and "best efforts" have not identified a qualified woman candidate. An even earlier bulletin had called for an 18-month vacancy period.[45]

64. The Inspector was told that the waiting period was established to ensure that serious efforts would be made to seek out qualified women candidates. But given the non-transparent recruitment processes discussed in the preceding section and the lack of analytical statistics, it is very difficult to determine objectively what effect this policy has had. Several people suggested that it has often been ignored in practice, or circumvented by various exception procedures. The slow increases in women staff, particularly at higher levels, would seem to bear out the assessment that the waiting period has not made much difference.

65. The existing performance evaluation system has also been much criticized. The "Group of 18" experts called on the Secretary-General in 1986 to introduce "an element of comparison" in the performance evaluation system, and to report annually on staff ratings and promotions.[46] The ICSC has done a great deal of work on performance management issues over the years. In a 1993 report it noted that while most United Nations system organizations now base performance evaluation on work tasks and actual performance, the United Nations still relies on a "trait and conduct" rating system[47] (e.g., "dependability", "oral expression"). As the ICSC noted in an earlier report on this subject, "Care should be taken to avoid basing ratings on traits and attitudes, which can only increase the subjectivity of the appraisals and may be seen as arbitrary and unfair".[48]

66. The Secretary-General had promised that a new performance evaluation system would be tested in 1990 and introduced in 1991.[49] During 1993 OHRM did work with staff groups to develop a new system, but it has not yet been announced. The General Assembly does not want to wait: in December 1993 it called for "performance evaluation for all officials, including senior officials, with objectives and performance indicators", to be established "no later than I January 1995".[50]

67. The JIU believes, as its 1971 report stated, that personnel actions and issues are key factors in many of the operational performance problems encountered in United Nations policy discussions. In addition to the recruitment study mentioned above, JIU is conducting a study during 1994 of the performance evaluation and appraisal system in the Secretariat, and an additional study of staff-management relationships throughout the United Nations system.

68. Meanwhile, career development remains an idea that has been invoked for decades in the United Nations Secretariat. However, it never seems quite ready to be put into practice. And as in recruitment, the present "non-system" works most to the advantage of the status quo, and to the detriment of those trying to catch up after years of neglect: women. Until a career development system is implemented, Secretariat personnel activities remain a laissez faire process that does not provide convincing evidence of effective use of human resources.

### C. Training

69. The 1985 action programme emphasized that training was needed to enhance staff awareness of complex interpersonal relationships in a multi-cultural environment, and to provide an understanding of the benefits to the United Nations that full participation of women in its programmes would provide. The report stated that such training would fail if it was conducted in isolation, without "broad support and unambiguous example" from senior management. The action programme proposed several actions to ensure women's access to training, to assess the organizational culture and values, and to incorporate more women's concerns into the training programme.[51]

70. During the past half-dozen years, interagency groups have increasingly recognized the importance of dynamic training programmes, and especially management development. These programmes are essential components of good human resources management and a critical tool to enable organizations to respond to challenging new operational tasks.[52] JIU has also noted some well-established staff training and development programmes in other United Nations system organizations. It will discuss these important programmes

in its report now in preparation on accountability and oversight in the United Nations system.

71. The United Nations, however fell far behind and is only now beginning to catch up. As long ago as 1978 the lack of management training was identified as a matter of concern in the Secretariat. In 1986 the Secretary-General cited once again the need for improved management, and for him to ensure that management skills training would be given high priority in the future. It was only in late 1992, however, that the Secretary-General reported that a comprehensive system of leadership, supervisory and management skills training for staff at all levels would finally be established.[53]

72. The Secretary-General's 1992 report observed that high-quality leadership and management are crucial to future operational success. However, it cited a "serious gap" between the almost 15,000 staff and existing training resources in the Secretariat. For instance, the priority management training programme - supervisory training - had reached only 120 people in the 1991-1992 training year. Further, the United Nations was spending only 0.29 percent of its staff costs for occupational and management training, versus the 2 to 3 percent spent by comparable United Nations agencies and some governments. The General Assembly endorsed the training proposals,[54] and provisionally approved additional resources which will bring the level of funding for other than language training to 0.51 percent of staff costs.

73. The Secretary-General promised in 1992 to include gender equality issues in the new supervisory training programme and to issue a brochure on gender-related issues.[55] The comprehensive training programme has now begun for senior officials Secretariat-wide, and it includes a section on gender and cultural diversity. This is a promising start. But it will take a long time to significantly influence the organizational climate by extending such training to the other 14,000 staff, given the very small budget still available for non-language training.

### D. Work/family-related issues

74. The 1985 action programme stated that much had been done during the 1975-1985 decade to meet women's needs, particularly by amending home leave provisions to end male/female discrimination, relaxing restrictions on the employment of spouses, and increasing the duration of maternity leave. The programme identified further improvement areas: work scheduling, child care arrangements, and improvement of working environments, especially for General Service staff.[56]

75. The "Group of 18" experts emphasized in 1986 that Secretariat personnel management must be based on clear, coherent, and transparent rules to guide staff conduct, with existing inconsistencies and ambiguities eliminated. In response, the Secretariat sought for a number of years to develop a simplified, more usable manual.[57] However, officials informed JIU in late 1993 that they still lacked the resources to complete this task. The 1993 JIU report on Secretariat accountability and oversight processes again emphasized the need for clear and complete guidance if staff are to be held accountable for their behaviour: the existing code of staff conduct was issued in 1954, and although it was reissued in 1982, it has never been updated.[58]

76. Work/family-related issues continue to be important for the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system, as observed in the most recent ICSC analysis of this topic. Especially for women, but also for men, supportive policies on these issues have a potentially significant correlation with enhanced productivity, job satisfaction, and reduced absenteeism.[59] While some working group activity is currently underway in the Secretariat, general progress in this area has been as slow as in other human resources areas. The United Nations could serve as a role model in work/family related issues, but it presently does not.

77. As the old issues are slowly addressed, rapid changes in work environments and career patterns are bringing new issues to the fore. An important example is that of the employment of spouses. A recent survey in a specialized agency found that the lack of employment of spouses at the agency's headquarters city led to "significant marital discord" in many cases. In fact, a third of the wives were suited to agency work, with most of them holding advanced university degrees.

78. Concurrently, a World Bank advertisement in an international magazine in early 1994, seeking development specialists to work in Washington D.C., states that women experts are particularly encouraged to apply. It goes on to emphasize that "sensitive to the issues involved in the relocation of dual career couples, the Bank provides career transition assistance to the spouses of new recruits." The United Nations currently lacks any such services, and the General Assembly called on the Secretary-General to consult with system agencies, and to report back in 1994 on actions that can be taken to "pursue actively" measures and possibilities for employment of spouses accompanying staff members. As the Assembly noted, such possibilities "contribute to attracting and retaining the most qualified staff".[60] The United Nations will clearly be at a competitive disadvantage if its human resources programmes do not also offer such help and commitment.

### E. Grievance redress systems

79. The 1985 action programme noted that although appropriate mechanisms and administrative instructions had been established to review grievances based on discrimination or sexual harassment, it appeared that the cases actually submitted to grievance panels represented only part of a much wider range of complaints and were felt to require too formal and public a process. The work plan therefore promised a further review of the adequacy of existing grievance systems.[61]

80. Subsequent activity in this general area has perhaps been the most tardy and unsatisfactory of all the five areas discussed in this Chapter. During the mid-1980s there were several studies, including one by the JIU,[62] of the Secretariat's "administration of justice" system for staff grievances, appeals, and disciplinary procedures. There was much dissatisfaction with its operation. In 1987 the Under-Secretary General for Administration and Management, for instance, stated that "something had gone very wrong" with the system: if it did not properly defend against mounting feelings of arbitrariness and discrimination, it could undermine staff morale and "finally destroy an international organization however high its ideals and purposes".[63]

81. The 1993 JIU report on accountability and oversight observed that the system was still ponderous and complex, painfully slow in settling cases, not independent, and quite expensive in the staff resources, emotions, and time that it consumes.[64] In mid-1993

the General Assembly could only "regret" that yet another report that it had requested on administration of justice from the Secretary-General in 1990 had not been submitted. It stressed the importance of a "just, transparent, simple, impartial and efficient system of internal justice", and requested the Secretary-General to make a comprehensive review, including costs of the system, to be submitted to the Assembly no later than its forty-ninth session in 1994.[65] Meanwhile, criticisms continue that the existing system inadequately defends staff against arbitrariness and discrimination - problems all too well known to women staff.

82. A major action has been the issuance of guidance on equal treatment of men and women and on sexual harassment in 1992.[66] A great deal of effort, research and discussion went into the preparation of these guidelines. Unfortunately, their initial application has sometimes been controversial, raising questions about the fairness and universality which such a sensitive administrative process must have if it is to be a credible and effective one.

83. In summary, it seems clear that the concerns with major obstacles to women's advancement in the Secretariat which were laid out in the 1985 "action programme" report have not been dealt with. The above analysis shows that in each of the five key areas identified in 1985, there has been very little substantive progress during the ensuring decade. The fault, as already noted, lies not only in the very modest women's action programmes, but in the inability of the existing personnel administration system to establish and implement overall human resources management.

## V. A PROPER "HUMAN RESOURCES" APPROACH

84. Human resources are often referred to, dramatically but correctly, as the "most precious asset" of the United Nations. Unfortunately, however, these assets have too often been treated in policy-making and operations much like the expenditure category of "furniture and equipment".

85. The Inspector believes that the critically-important human assets of the United Nations must be planned for and managed in a much more transparent, coherent, strategic, and results-based way, in accordance with modern human resource management practice. This change must occur within the Secretariat, in OHRM, and in governing body deliberations, through a much more disciplined and effective process of mutual deliberation and followup of results.

86. Transparent, integrated consideration of personnel issues is also essential for women's status issues, for three primary reasons. First, the continuing failure to establish overall human resources programmes has been a central factor hampering the execution of action programmes for the advancement of women, as discussed in some detail in the preceding Chapter.

87. Second, the consideration of women's issues in patchwork reports and in isolation from other priority human resource issues over the years has marginalized, blurred and trivialized women's concerns.

88. Third, the lack of human resources management in the Secretariat hampers organizational functioning and the interests of all staff. But women, who are still trying to catch up and assume their proper role, have been hurt the most.

89. In short, women's advancement has suffered for years because the senior officials, programme managers, and personnel administrators entrusted with implementation of these programmes have consistently failed to "get the job done." For women to truly advance, human resources planning and management in the United Nations Secretariat must finally be established.

90. Past problems created by inadequate overall human resources management are discussed in this Chapter, along with new directions and recommended corrective actions. Chapter VI then discusses specific new actions for the advancement of women within this framework.

### A. The lack of dynamism and substantive policy dialogue in the past

91. One of the earliest, but still most often-cited, of all JIU reports was its 1971 assessment of personnel problems in the United Nations. The report began by noting the strong dissatisfaction with personnel matters expressed by Member States, senior officials, and staff. This unhappiness went far beyond specific personnel discussions. Member States expressed great frustration at seemingly endless discussions and inaction concerning management techniques and initiatives in the Secretariat, while senior officials cited seemingly insurmountable obstacles in performing their duties. In both cases, the problems were largely due to basic underlying personnel problems.

92. The JIU report noted "a deep-rooted will for change in matters of personnel policy". It therefore examined in detail the existing "crisis of modernization", which was precipitated by major changes in Secretariat operations: rapid growth in staff size, much more complex and diverse work tasks, difficulties of recruitment, and confusions about skills and reform actions the Secretariat needed in technical management fields. The report's recommendations were directed toward a modernization of personnel methods as quickly as possible, to secure a Secretariat that would be more efficient, flexible, and in keeping with the needs of Member States.[67]

93. This and other JIU reports of the period contributed to a rather vigorous process of personnel policy reform, initial computerization, and programme budgeting and evaluation efforts during the 1970s in governing bodies, in the Secretariat, and by outside expert groups.

94. By the mid-1980s, however, the dynamism of Secretariat management reform had bogged down. A 1984 JIU report on reporting to the Economic Commission and Social Council (ECOSOC) found that the Secretariat submitted reports which were voluminous, too late, rather diverse, only partly summarized, too descriptive, and without recommendations. This situation greatly hampered ECOSOC policy formulation and required urgent corrective action.[68]

95. The Secretary-General agreed that too many Secretariat documents were descriptive rather than analytical, did not always identify key policy issues, and lacked policy recommendations. He also noted that while Secretariat reports tended to rely cautiously on established views, intergovernmental bodies often requested routine reports as a substitute for a search among members for compromise, concession and agreement. However, he endorsed JIU's conclusions and stated that efforts would continue to make documents more analytical, highlight key policy issues, and prepare more concise and consolidated reports.[69]

96. Unfortunately, the quality of "assessment" reporting seems to have changed little over the past decade. The 1993 JIU report on accountability and oversight in the Secretariat found that some reports were more clear and analytical. But many others were still of the "on the one hand...on the other hand...very difficult...others have failed...one might try ... will keep under careful review..." type.

97. Too many Secretariat reports still do not crisply document and summarize past reporting on a topic (but do seem to repeat it). They gloss over rather than pinpoint problems, and still lack summaries, analysis of options, and firm conclusions and recommendations. JIU observed that this vast amount of "assessment" reporting severely hampers United Nations accountability and oversight, clogs reporting channels, ties up scarce staff resources in trivial reporting chores, and deprives top management and governing bodies of the substantive information they need to make effective policy decisions.[70]

98. Human resources is certainly a major example of this disappointing reporting pattern. The only two regular, broad-scope reports by the Secretariat are both essentially "raw information" compilations, representing reporting requirements that were established decades ago. An annual report to the General Assembly on the "Composition of the Secretariat" provides some 50 pages of statistical tables intended to "facilitate an assessment of the distribution of staff" by nationality, sex, grade and type of

appointment.[71] An annual (but interrupted since 1991) "List of staff of the United Nations Secretariat" provides more than 350 pages of detailed information on titles, grade levels, nationality, and gender of individual staff members.[72]

99. In 1978 the Secretary-General issued a very interesting and substantive report on the implementation of personnel policy reforms,[73] which grew out of the 1971 JIU report on personnel problems. Even this report, however, contained only 32 paragraphs of policy discussion, and in subsequent years, such substantive human resource reporting has almost disappeared. The modest narrative paragraphs of the present "Composition of the Secretariat" report deal mostly with basic background explanations of "geographical distribution" and "desirable range" concepts. Infrequently, they include a few paragraphs on such topics as recruitment or women's advancement, but in recent years these treatments have been very sketchy and irregular.

100. The only other regular reporting on human resource issues is (what has become) an annual report on women's issues, but it follows the same cautiously informational pattern. As already discussed in Chapter IV, the original annual report in 1985 had an excellent analytical discussion of problems and actions taken for women's advancement.[74] Subsequent reports, however, have been statistical compilations with only a very cursory discussion of forward-looking "developments", and scarcely any analysis of priority policy issues for women's advancement, measures of progress, problems encountered, results achieved, strategies being followed or requiring redirection, and emerging issues.[75] (It should also be noted that every one of these reports since 1985 has been issued late in the General Assembly session (October or November), rather than at an early date which would allow Member States to properly reflect on and deal with them).

101. The women's reports for 1991 and 1992 provide a clear example of these reporting failures. In 1990 the General Assembly called on the Secretary-General to provide, in 1991, an action programme for women's advancement for the period 1991-1995, including a "comprehensive evaluation and analysis" of obstacles, an assessment of the adequacy of existing machinery to implement the programme, and a detailed programme of time-limited activities.[76]

102. The Secretary-General's report on women's advancement in 1991, however, stated that he had "initiated measures for...preparation" of the above materials, but needed more time for their completion. He promised that the action programme and the "comprehensive evaluation and analysis" would be provided to the Assembly in 1992.[77] But the subsequent 1992 report contained only "an analysis of obstacles", prepared by an external consultant and summarized in a mere nine sentences. The action programme was also covered in 11 once-over-lightly paragraphs, without measures of progress, assessment of implementation machinery, or timetables.[78]

103. In the absence of regular, comprehensive reporting on substantive human resource matters, the General Assembly has long relied on requests for ad hoc reports from the Secretariat. Unfortunately, this pattern of serious requests, feeble responses, and Assembly dissatisfaction is becoming an epidemic in such reporting, as shown by the Assembly response to many recent reports concerning human resource issues that were prepared (or not prepared) by the Secretariat. During 1993 the General Assembly:

(a) expressed concern at problems of late issuance of documentation, inadequate implementation of some Assembly mandates, and the undertaking of some non-mandated measures, and stressed again the importance of sustained, timely and substantive dialogue and consultations between the Member States and the Secretary-General;[79]

(b) regretted that a report of the Secretary-General on restructuring and efficiency of the Secretariat did not provide an analysis of the effects of the restructuring as it had called for, and requested a new, analytical report for 1994;[80]

(c) regretted that a note of the Secretary-General on the control and management of posts did not constitute the report called for, and requested a new report for 1994;[81]

(d) regretted that a report on the accountability and responsibility of programme managers did not provide an adequate response to the General Assembly's requests of 1991, 1992 and 1993, and requested the establishment of a system of accountability by 1 January 1995, with a report to the Assembly thereon in 1994;[82]

(e) urged the Secretary-General to make "without delay" a complete review of the existing performance evaluation system in the Secretariat, to develop it into an effective system to accurately assess staff performance and improve staff accountability;[83] and

(f) regretted that a report on the administration of justice in the Secretariat, called for in 1990, had not been submitted, and requested a comprehensive review and report thereon no later than 1994.[84]

104. United Nations personnel policy, reporting, and dialogue have thus gone full circle, returning to the unfortunate situation that JIU found 23 years ago in 1971: a strong dissatisfaction among Member States, senior officials, and staff at seemingly endless personnel discussions, and a lack of actions to establish and use modern personnel management techniques in the Secretariat.

### B. New directions: dynamism, transparency, dialogue, results

105. Fortunately, the way out of this quagmire is indicated by strong new policy orientations and attitudes. These statements include the following.

106. The **Secretary-General** told the Fifth Committee in November 1992 that the Organization had "been operating in slow motion". It required "optimum use" of its human resources, "new ways of thinking", "modern management practices" to enhance its operations, and introduction of "an integrated approach to all the interrelated managerial issues". But it could not do these things over the long term without "fundamental changes in the present outmoded system of personnel management".[85]

107. A **General Assembly** resolution of December 1992 requested the ICSC, in addition to its studies of remuneration (including new studies to ensure the competitiveness of the United Nations common system), to give equal attention in its work to sound personnel management, including such measures as recruitment forecasting, human resource planning, performance management, and staff development and training.[86]

108. In April 1993 a **staff representative** told executive heads of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) that staff retention and motivation problems, the lack

of resources for improving staff capabilities, and endless expert analyses of system weaknesses were all rooted in United Nations "business as usual" and basic fears of change. He found it "incongruous" that personnel processes should remain fixed in a system that was "manifestly failing to serve the needs of the Organization and its staff." He concluded that "Management practices, personnel policies, recruitment and promotion must be made transparent, rational, fair, non-discriminatory and free from political bias".[87]

109. **General Assembly** resolution 47/226 on "personnel questions" of April 1993 welcomed the integrated approach to personnel management planning adopted by the Secretary-General. It stressed the importance of recruitment of quality staff, career development, performance evaluation and accountability, staff training, increased staff creativity and productivity, and a just and transparent administration of justice system. The Assembly urged the Secretary-General, where necessary, to review and improve all personnel policies and procedures to make them "more simple, transparent and relevant" to new demands on the Secretariat, while fully developing staff potential. It also called on him to submit a "comprehensive report" in 1994 on all the personnel matters it had identified.[88]

110. In August 1993 an **interagency group**, the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) of ACC began work on a longer-term strategy which would engage Member States, United Nations system organizations, and common system bodies such as ICSC in an effort to improve the organizations' effectiveness along with their conditions of service. This process might begin with a definition of objectives, functions, and measurable targets to gauge performance and the effectiveness of human resources, and specific steps to enhance managerial accountability.[89] The ACC has subsequently asked CCAQ to pursue this effort.

111. The **Secretary-General** told a staff/management committee in September 1993 that "the staff of the United Nations are its most precious asset", and that competitive pay and conditions, clear systems of accountability, modern management methods, expanded training, and a system of "purposeful performance evaluation" are required in an era of rapid change. He expected that most of these reforms would be in place by 1995, to achieve the aim of a modern, efficient, well-managed and accountable international civil service which could offer good career prospects to high-quality, motivated staff.[90]

112. In November 1993, to meet unprecedented demands on the Organization, the **Secretary-General** established a new placement and promotion system to provide increased flexibility in the use of human resources and streamline administrative procedures. The purpose of the new, continuous system is "to increase the transparency of the placement and promotion processes, which should reward staff for competence, creativity, versatility and, increasingly, mobility". The Secretary-General emphasized that appointment, promotion and placement policy would be constantly reviewed and enhanced, based on experience and the long-term needs of the organization.[91]

113. The **Secretary-General** also reported in November 1993 his conclusion that the Department of Administration and Management (DAM) must play a crucial role in the transformation of the Organization. He gave high priority to the effective functioning of DAM, particularly to enhancing its responsiveness to changing requirements and to "improving its interface with intergovernmental bodies to ensure a timely flow of information and effective consultations between Member States and the Secretariat". In

addition he found a more unified, coordinated approach to all managerial functions to be indispensable. He announced that he was designating an Assistant Secretary-General to oversee both the budgetary and personnel functions of DAM.[92]

114. In December 1993 the **General Assembly** repeated its request of 1991 that the Secretary-General review and develop procedures and norms, including workload analyses, to justify any changes in posts, and report on this matter in 1994. It also requested the Secretary-General to study the organizational structure of DAM, particularly senior posts, for a 1994 report, and noted the growing imbalance between proposed administrative and substantive expenses in the programme budget.[93]

115. Finally, the **General Assembly** also called in December 1993 for the establishment of a transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility no later than 1 January 1995, and requested a report thereon by the Secretary-General in 1994. The system was requested to include the following elements:

"(a) the establishment of clear responsibility for programme delivery, including performance indicators as a measure of quality control;

(b) a mechanism ensuring that programme managers are accountable for the effective management of the personnel and financial resources allocated to them;

(c) performance evaluation for all officials, including senior officials, with objectives and performance indicators;

(d) effective training of staff in financial and management responsibilities".[94]

### C. The focal point: a biennial human resources report

116. The above list of policy intentions is a very ambitious and impressive set of efforts to transform United Nations personnel activities. Given the failure to prepare a much more limited set of personnel proposals and changes as discussed in section A. above, however, one must wonder how this new workload can ever be carried out.

117. Now is the time to ensure that the hopes of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, and staff groups for a strong, forward-looking human resources management system will be firmly implemented. Such a system could help greatly to ensure disciplined implementation and results to enhance human resources performance, and to finally provide a substantive, continuous dialogue with intergovernmental bodies on human resources matters.

118. A promising first action step is found in the "comprehensive report" which the General Assembly requested the Secretariat to provide in 1994 on the implementation of the matters raised in resolution 47/226 of April 1993.[95] Unfortunately, this **ad hoc** report quickly lost its "comprehensive" character because of all the subsequent developments, as outlined in section B. above.

119. The Inspector believes that the reform process needs to go one critical step further. She recommends that the Secretary-General begin providing a biennial report to the General Assembly on human resources policies, progress, and results, prepared by the

Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM). At a minimum, this report should include regular, succinct (about two pages each) but substantive sections on:

(a) an overview of plans, strategy, and progress;

(b) medium-term human resources planning, trends, and changes;

(c) the overall career development system;

(d) recruitment/appointment, placement and promotion;

(e) performance evaluation;

(f) the system of accountability and responsibility;

(g) staff training and retraining;

(h) improvement of the status of women;

(i) geographic distribution;

(j) high-level posts;

(k) the General Service and related staff;

(l) the management and utilization of posts;

(m) staff-management relations;

(n) conditions of service;

(o) work/family-related issues;

(p) the administration of justice system;

(q) interagency activities, including ICSC efforts;

(r) the strengthening of OHRM capacities; and

(s) followup of human resources audits/inspections.

120. This report would be prepared and issued in even-numbered years, since personnel matters are now considered only every second year. It need not negate other special personnel reporting arrangements which already exist, such as reports to the Commission on the Status of Women on women's advancement. However, it could actually reduce reporting burdens on OHRM, by concentrating succinct, integrated reporting in one regular document rather than a continuing, burdensome flow of irregular and **ad hoc** documents. In addition, the report's initial components, as outlined above, could be revised and combined over time as needs change.

121. Any report is, of course, just more words: it is actions that count. But a biennial human resources report would be a very important stimulus to effective human resources actions in the future, providing on a regular basis:

(a) **an integrated approach**: the report would allow senior officials and the General Assembly to implement their often-expressed desire for an integrated managerial approach, in this case by considering all major human resource aspects and interrelationships together (and as the list shows, there are many of them);

(b) **a strategic focus**: each section would concentrate on, and steadily update, the relevant objectives in that area and the actions being taken to achieve them;

(c) **disciplined dialogue and transparency**; the report would provide a consistent framework of human resources objectives, data, tasks, responsibilities, and actions for regular consideration by policymakers, in an open and orderly decision-making process that presently does not exist;

(d) **enhanced understanding**: an added, and by no means trivial, benefit of a comprehensive, biennial human resources report would be to allow Member States to clarify and better understand the often obtuse jargon and complex structure of United Nations personnel matters. (For instance, how are "high-level", "senior", or "policy-making" posts defined? How exactly does "recruitment" differ from "appointment", "placement", and "promotion"? What are the "and related categories" associated with the General Service, and the various types of short-term appointments?); and

(e) **analysis, followup, and accountability** ; each report section should specify results achieved, and critically analyze problems and constraints encountered, for readjustment and firm followup by policy-makers.

122. As a prominent economist recently observed, problems of information - "who knows what" - are central to an understanding of all our societal institutions. A biennial human resources report would present all the dimensions of human resources policy and management, at one time and in one place, for proper consideration by senior officials and the General Assembly.

123. This biennial report would underscore, as JIU emphasized in its 1971 report, that many pressing "administrative" and "programme" problems in the Secretariat are largely due to underlying personnel problems. It would permit the priority attention and regular followup on personnel issues which has been lacking for so long. Most importantly, it would allow the "precious asset" of human resources to assume its proper place in General Assembly deliberations on administrative policy, alongside the annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization and the biennial programme planning and budgeting documents.

### D. A first essential: strengthening OHRM management capacities

124. To make the new human resources report a reality, OHRM must be strengthened to allow it to properly support and implement a dynamic and responsive human resources programme.

125. Part of the problem is historical context. The personnel field has moved through three broad stages in the past several decades, as shown by the changing titles of personnel units in the United Nations:

(a) "personnel administration", the original concept, involved the bureaucratic procedures and routines necessary to hire, pay, train, support, and oversee the people in an organization;

(b) the more recent "personnel services" idea recognized that a personnel department should support the substantive departments which carry out an organization's central work tasks;

(c) "human resources management" changes the entire focus: since the basic product of more and more organizations is complex, knowledge-intensive services, their staff are not just simple production inputs, but essential strategic assets to be carefully selected, encouraged, managed and developed.

126. Current human resources management recognizes not just the role of the "knowledge worker", but also the growing worldwide mobility and availability of skilled labour, and the rapid and continuing changes in career patterns, job requirements, and skills. An organization needs to plan strategically how best to select and deploy its human resources. It must also organize the work flexibly to meet changing requirements, and establish effective performance rewards and sanctions.

127. Above all, organizations that want to attract and retain high-quality people longer-term must provide challenging and rewarding jobs and continuing education and training. This in turn requires a human resources department, and programme managers throughout the organization, who can plan and manage the entire human resources cycle of work force requirements and availabilities, recruitment and placement, evaluation, rewards and sanctions, and training and development.[96]

128. Unfortunately, the United Nations Secretariat is still largely locked into the "personnel administration" stage of operations. The "Group of 18" experts concluded in 1986 that personnel policy and management had suffered in the United Nations due to political and other pressures influencing staff selection. They called on the Secretary-General to ensure staff selection in accordance with the Charter principles, improve management of human resources, protect the authority of the head of personnel, and rename the personnel office as the "Office of Human Resources Management".[97] (The name was quickly changed, but the functions continue largely as before).

129. Others have urged similar actions. The Steering Committee for women's advancement, for instance, called in 1988 for the development of a detailed inventory of all posts and staff as a first step toward integrated human resources planning to ensure maximum use of staff and career opportunities, and for the strengthening of training programmes and human resources planning in the organization.[98]

130. In 1990, however, the Secretary-General reported that, while an administrative streamlining of OHRM had occurred, there was an "increasing need to strengthen the long-term policy formulation and human resources planning function," and that a plan to centralize information and planning activities under the head of OHRM needed to be "revived and implemented".[99] The 1992 report on career development similarly stated

that human resources planning, forecasting, and analysis are "essential aspects" of United Nations strategic planning overall, to enable the Organization to adopt appropriate personnel strategies and avoid delay in responding to new mandates. However, the report acknowledged that "systematic planning of this nature is not being undertaken".[100]

131. OHRM had, until 1987, a Division of Policy Co-ordination to coordinate and make proposals for personnel policy development, and to formulate, analyze and consider revision of personnel policies and programmes. This Division was abolished, however, during the financial crisis of 1987. The two Director-level positions of the Division were also eliminated or removed from OHRM, and there are presently no policy coordination posts at all.

132. The Inspector does not believe that OHRM can carry out its substantive responsibilities for human resources management when its strategic "brain" has been removed. This problem is even worse because the turnover in OHRM and DAM leadership has been so relentless over the past half-dozen years that incumbents have scarcely had a chance to consider longer-term management development issues before they were gone. To correct this lack of managerial capacity and perspective, and the confinement of OHRM staff in the heavy demands of day-to-day work and multiple mandates, the Inspector believes that three steps are necessary.

133. To establish firm human resources planning, management, and reporting, the Inspector recommends first that a small unit be established under the direct supervision of the head of OHRM. Two specialists, at the senior professional level and with specific education and high-quality experience in human resources management, would be sufficient, with secretarial assistance. They would provide policy formulation and analysis on human resources policy issues, demographic and statistical studies, monitoring of human resources activities, and (in conjunction with OHRM and other managers) preparation of the biennial human resources report and special reporting on human resources issues. Since day-to-day pressure assignments inevitably crowd out longer-range policy preparation and analysis, these specialists should not be assigned any other duties.

134. Second, there is a strong need to upgrade the human resources management qualifications and experience of OHRM senior and professional staff. OHRM officials confirmed that only a few of the more senior OHRM staff presently have professional university backgrounds in personnel administration, human resources management or organizational development, and/or professional experience in these fields before joining OHRM. They said that a training plan is being considered now to help amend this situation.

135. The Inspector recommends that future recruitments of OHRM staff pay priority attention to hiring people with specific and solid professional educations and experience in human resources management. For professional staff already on board, efforts should be made where possible to identify and provide specific human resources training programmes at universities or through consultants. In addition, OHRM staff should be encouraged to join and become active in professional societies in the personnel, human resources, management development, and organizational development fields. The judicious use of more consultants to inject new ideas and diagnose problems should also be considered (see also Chapter VI following).

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136. The third and final action step for initial strengthening concerns the overall responsibilities, authority, and staffing of OHRM. The Office has been doubly pressured by the enormous expansion of peacekeeping and humanitarian missions in the past few years, in addition to the large volume of tasks and mandates already loaded onto it over the years. It has had to not only recruit hundreds of extra short-term staff for such missions, but has also released many of its own staff on these missions. In addition, the recent downgrading of the head of OHRM from an Assistant Secretary-General to a Director-level post risks damaging the stature of both the Office and the human resources function, in contradiction to the "crucial role" which the Secretary-General has accorded to DAM in transforming the organization, and the call of the "Group of 18" experts to protect the authority of the head of personnel.[101]

137. The Inspector therefore recommends that OHRM workloads, tasks, authority, and senior and professional staffing be kept under close review to ensure that effective human resources programmes can - and are being - implemented. For this reason, she has also suggested (see section C. above) that the proposed biennial human resources report include a specific section on strengthening of OHRM capacities.

138. The Inspector fully recognizes (as shown by the subtitle of this report) that the recommendations to provide a biennial human resources report, a specialized planning staff, and modest OHRM strengthening are only the beginning of a long-overdue process to establish human resources management in the Secretariat. Broader challenges still lie ahead in the future to ensure effective action.

(a) The Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) was proposed and approved six years ago. Its development has cost more than $40 million so far, with another $13 million required in 1994-1995 to complete "phase one", and no clear end in sight.[102] The Secretary-General's 1992 report on career development promised that IMIS would integrate all personnel management functions and become "a critical tool for the effective implementation of a comprehensive career development system".[103] However, a clear assessment is needed of the near-term personnel data, statistics, and qualititative improvements which IMIS will provide; the costly staff resources it will release from bureaucratic routines; and exactly when these results will occur. IMIS should contribute decisively to urgent human resources management development efforts now, not serve as a continuing excuse for delaying much-needed improvements.

(b) DAM consumes some $438 million a year of United Nations resources. This large administrative share of the total budget was noted with concern in 1993 by the General Assembly.[104] Beyond the IMIS project, which is limited in its scope, there is a strong need to carry on a vigorous and continuous modernization of overall DAM and OHRM programmes and processes, in order to free up resources, staff time, and talent from old bureaucratic routines for the development of vital managerial systems. These actions need to move forward much more rapidly than the leisurely pace of selected tasks which was offered by the 1992 Secretariat report on career development.

(c) Most importantly and most difficult, the deeply-entrenched "personnel administration" mode, and the oft-noted Secretariat culture of resistance to change, need to be overcome throughout the United Nations Secretariat. Human resources management is not just a matter for OHRM. This Office should become primarily a policy-maker, facilitator, consultant, and monitor of human resources policies and programmes, rather than the present cumbersome administrative mechanism. The General Assembly has

specified that programme managers throughout the Secretariat must become accountable for the effective management of the personnel resources allocated to them.[105] This involves human resources forecasting, management, and career development, and requires, of course, much stronger managerial guidance, reporting, and training to help the managers implement these functions properly.

139. The recommendations made in this report for biennial human resources reporting and OHRM strengthening, the Inspector believes, are initial, essential steps toward finally installing the human resources system that the "Group of 18" experts advocated in 1986, but which (except for the quick name change to OHRM) have been delayed ever since. The policy statements of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General during 1993 provide the critical opportunity and impetus to finally install proper human resources management.

140. For its part, the JIU is currently preparing reports on other central elements of an integrated human resources management system. The Unit has included in its 1994 work programme reviews of (a) recruitment, placement and promotion policies and (b) the performance appraisal and evaluation system (both in the United Nations Secretariat); and (c) accountability and oversight issues and (d) staff-management relations (both in the United Nations system, including the United Nations Secretariat).

### E. A second essential: ensuring accountability and followup

141. A second essential component of effective human resources management and reporting in the Secretariat in the future is greatly increased accountability. At present, accountability for personnel improvement actions is often given to "OHRM and programme managers". Unfortunately, accountability assigned to everyone usually means the accountability of no one. The mediocre record of women's advancement and other priority human resources areas (as discussed in Chapter IV) bears out this pessimistic assessment. In addition, future human resources reporting does not need any more of the unproductive style of past reporting noted in section A. above ("on the one hand.... on the other hand.... one might try...").

142. A central element of accountability is performance and progress measures. The JIU has reported over the years on cost-measurement systems, assessment of staff requirements, workload analyses, time-limited objectives, work programmes, and achievement indicators which can be provided to governing bodies to increase programme transparency and help them assess performance and ensure accountability.[106]

143. Some progress was made in the United Nations system in translation and other conference service work more than a decade ago,[107] and the Secretariat provided an updated report on such standards to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in 1990.[108] In other administrative areas, however, the Secretariat has moved very cautiously in developing workload standards and data: a 1991 Secretariat report cited many complexities involved, and suggested a pilot study.[109]

144. The General Assembly, however, continues to push firmly for action:

(a) in 1988 it urged the Secretary-General to consider workload analysis in restructuring efforts:[110]

(b) in 1990 it further "encouraged the intent of the Secretariat to develop management and work-load analysis techniques";[111]

(c) in April 1993 it urged the Secretary-General to review and improve all personnel policies and procedures to make them "more simple, transparent, and relevant";[112]

(d) it stated emphatically in December 1992 that "workload standards and other management techniques which are of crucial importance" to determining resource requirements remained unutilized, and should be developed for programme budget use for 1994-1995 and beyond;[113]

(e) in December 1993 the Assembly endorsed the establishment of a "transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility no later than 1 January 1995", to include

(1) "performance indicators as a measure of quality control";
(2) "a mechanism ensuring that programme managers are accountable for the effective management of the personnel and financial resources allocated to them";
(3) "performance evaluation for all officials, including senior officials, with objectives and performance indicators";[114] and

(f) in December 1993 it also repeated its prior request of 1991 "that the Secretary-General review and develop procedures and norms, including workload analyses, to justify the creation, suppression, reclassification, conversion and redeployment of posts" and report thereon in 1994.[115]

145. Secretariat personnel programmes have been particularly slow to develop meaningful performance and workload statistics. Personnel measures presented in recent programme performance reports, for instance, were primarily statistics on volume of paperwork processed.[116] Such activities have little to do with programme effectiveness. Further, these measures have not even been consistent from one performance report to the next, so that there is no "baseline data" to allow comparisons and measure performance improvement.

146. The biennial human resources report proposed in this report, in order to be of real use in policy-making, must provide analysis and carefully-chosen statistics which show where the real problems and bottlenecks are. Constructive, informed dialogue can then take place and informed solutions can be developed. These statistics could focus, for example, on the average length of time that professional posts remain vacant (and analyse trends, reasons, and where the successes and most serious problems occur throughout the Secretariat). They could state what percentage of staff members have had their performance evaluated at the regular required intervals (and explore again where the successes and problems occur and why). They could also show how many staff members have been trained in specific fields, and how many years will be needed to train all eligible staff in the Secretariat. The following Chapter on women's advancement also cites the wealth of informative statistics that were identified long ago in that area, but which have never been steadily developed and applied to illuminate women's problems and progress.

147. In addition to the firm General Assembly calls for change cited above, delegates in the Fifth Committee in the fall of 1993 spoke increasingly of creating a "culture of accountability", serious systems to judge performance in all departments (including specifically OHRM), visible service standards, and a firm accounting for the discharge of responsibilities and the achievement of agreed performance. Government organizations in Member States have established systems of performance indicators, including the measurement of efficiency and progress toward human resources goals. The Inspector sees no reason why the United Nations Secretariat cannot do the same.

148. The Inspector recommends that carefully selected performance, progress, workload and results data and statistics should be developed and maintained for each substantive area of the proposed biennial report on human resources. They should be regularly updated or supplemented with new information which highlights successes, problems, or constraints. Responsibility should be clearly fixed for these various outcomes, and the specific commendations, lessons learned, or corrective actions should follow.

149. A second central element of human resources accountability is stronger scrutiny by outsiders and regular, transparent followup. The Inspector recommends that inspections, audits, evaluations, investigations or other assessments made by the internal oversight units, the Board of Auditors, the ACABQ, the JIU, outside consultants or expert groups be given greater attention in human resources reporting. Followup should specify actions being taken to ensure that any deficiencies and problems that were identified are being promptly addressed and that appropriate corrective actions are being taken. For these reasons, the Inspector proposed a specific section in the biennial human resources report (section C. above) to provide systematic followup of reviews made of human resources programmes.

150. A final element is overall public accountability itself, which has long been missing in Secretariat administrative programmes. In 1988 JIU issued an in-depth assessment of weak reporting to governing bodies on Secretariat performance and results.[117] The report's conclusions and recommendations were twice commended by the General Assembly,[118] but the Secretariat never really took action. The report found in particular a lack of systematic reporting on management performance and improvements in the (almost) half of the regular budget devoted to management and conference service support activities. JIU recommended that at least a few regular reports on selected topics could be made, to provide a powerful stimulus to significant and sustained operational improvements in Secretariat administrative programmes.

151. The Secretariat asserted that its internal evaluation system was still too weak to support stronger performance reporting, despite more than a decade of development effort. It also argued that efforts by the Committee on Conferences provided some assessment reporting, and that the new computerized system being developed (now the IMIS) would enable more performance reporting in the future.[119] IMIS is still not ready six years later (as noted throughout this report), the inadequacy of the existing programme performance reports has been repeatedly confirmed, and there is still no systematic reporting on Secretariat management performance and improvements.

152. In early 1993 an independent advisory group on future United Nations financing observed that

> "The future credibility of the U. N. will depend in large measure on the effectiveness of its management, on the quality of its staff, and on improvements in its structure and administration".[120]

153. The Inspector believes that the biennial human resources report recommended in this report, prepared by a highly professional staff and with a strong analytical and results content, would be a long overdue first step toward strengthening United Nations programmes overall. It would also clearly demonstrate that the Secretariat is determined to provide firm management accountability and disciplined improvement in all facets of the "most precious asset" managed by its personnel office and programme managers.

## VI. A NEW, RESULTS-ORIENTED PROGRAMME TO ADVANCE THE STATUS OF WOMEN

154. Quantitatively, as measured by the "numbers game", and qualitatively, as reflected by the feeble efforts to change the organizational culture, the United Nations "action programmes" for women of the last decade have failed. Progress has been made in hiring lower-level professional staff, and a few new policies (but not practices) have addressed workplace issues. But overall progress is very weak when measured against the detailed objectives, policies, and targets established over the years by the General Assembly, by successive Secretary-Generals, and by the action programmes themselves.

155. This situation is all the more disappointing when it is realized that the United Nations:

(a) states explicitly in its charter the principle of equality of men and women and has confirmed this with many conventions and declarations;

(b) seeks to serve as a central worldwide authority and leader for women's advancement and issues, as forcefully outlined by the Secretary-General in his International Women's Day speech of March 1994;[121]

(c) is presently organizing a Fourth World Conference on Women for 1995, to critically assess women's progress in all areas;

(d) has established and successfully implemented for years an elaborate system to ensure equitable distribution of Secretariat posts geographically among (now more than) 185 Member States and their regions, but seems presently unable to do the same for a much simpler men/women situation.

156. Because of the discrepancy between words and actions, the Secretariat's action programmes of the past decade for women's advancement risk becoming a token effort. The United Nations loses doubly from this implementation failure. First and most pragmatically, a weak women's programme shuts the United Nations off from the rapidly increasing pool of skilled and talented women worldwide, particularly if women sense that, despite some hiring, the underlying organizational climate is still inhospitable to women.

157. Second, gender equity is an ever more topical issue among national and international organizations of all kinds. Many contributor governments have surpassed the United Nations in gender balance and expect the Secretariat to catch up. Other Member States want to see women in substantive staff positions in gender-sensitive and high-priority United Nations human development, grassroots, and participative programmes, rather than just policy slogans and brochures. In addition, a growing body of research suggests that women managers provide fresh perspectives and important managerial skills (such as building consensus and teamwork), and can encourage a much more open and creative work environment. This is particularly important for organizations like the United Nations, which are undergoing major transformations.

158. The General Assembly's calls for new personnel orientations and practices in many areas in 1993 (summarized in Chapter V.B. of this report), can make a great difference for women staff by challenging old personnel routines and beginning to view all human

resources of the United Nations as the acknowledged "invaluable asset" which needs to be carefully selected, managed, and enhanced. While sound human resources management is an essential step toward equity for women staff, however, it is not sufficient by itself.

159. **The United Nations Secretariat needs a new beginning in its programmes for women**, one that combines the existing policies and strategies, which are still quite relevant, **with a strong new emphasis on transparency, accountability, and results**. Only with new-found determination to "just do it", and with credible and systematic followup, can the Secretariat translate these policies and strategies into actions which finally allow women to obtain the gender equality accorded them by the United Nations Charter.

160. The Inspector therefore proposes the following ten steps for a new action programme. The Secretary-General and the General Assembly must take the lead in this effort. They need **to make a fresh start by stating clearly that the focus will now be on implementation actions as an integral element of day-to-day United Nations operations**.

> A new results-oriented programme. The Inspector recommends that the General Assembly and the Secretary-General replace the ineffective current women's "action programme" with a new programme. This new programme, clearly communicated and widely-publicized, should firmly emphasize accountability and followup actions to finally implement past General Assembly resolutions to advance women's status (establish gender equity), including but not limited to the ten specific steps laid out below.

161. From the very beginning of the action programmes in 1985, it has been clearly stated that senior management commitment, leadership, and actions are absolutely essential to successfully improve women's status. Yet progress has been very slow, the proportions of women decrease steadily as grade level rises, and actual senior management accountability has never been visible. The problem is all the more urgent because so few women are presently in policy-making and senior posts. The higher levels of the hierarchy must provide clear leadership. Otherwise, the General Assembly's overall objectives for women's representation, and calls for equal treatment, will never be realized.

> **Step 1.** The senior officials comprising the new Advisory Panel on Management and Finance should include women's status as a regular agenda item for followup at Panel meetings, and actively accept their responsibility for seeking out qualified women and steadily improving their representation, particularly in senior level posts.

162. The Steering Committee has made more than 50 recommendations for actions to advance women's status since 1986, almost all of which have been accepted by the Secretary-General in a series of Bulletins. Yet the very limited progress achieved, both in overall women's advancement and in implementing various specific recommendations, has been a matter of increasing concern to both the Steering Committee and the Secretary-General. The Committee has in fact not reported formally since December 1991: in late 1993 it did however urge the Secretary-General to ensure implementation of established guidelines for promotion and recruitment of women.

**Step 2**. The reports of the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat and the associated Secretary-General's Bulletins should resume with increased visibility and much more emphasis on specific actions taken to implement past recommendations, on incisive analysis of the problems being encountered, and on further recommendations necessary for continued progress.

163. The action programmes for improvement of women's status have been on a starvation diet: they lack the basic staff resources required to implement the programmes. In particular, the Steering Committee has been greatly hampered in carrying out its monitoring responsibilities by a lack of capacity on its own, or from the single Focal Point or other staff in OHRM, to analyze progress made, identify problems, and develop new approaches. In addition, and despite excellent statistical measures proposed by the UNITAR colloquia of the 1970s[122] and other sources, the Steering Committee has noted (as has the Inspector) the serious inadequacy of existing statistics to monitor women's progress, diagnose problems, and develop corrective measures.[123] In light of overall severe resource limitations in the Secretariat, the Inspector believes that the absolute minimum solution is to engage highly-qualified external consultants on a modest but regular basis to provide specific analyses and careful followup, as well as new and independent perspectives and ideas, to the programme.

**Step 3**. From within existing resources the Secretary-General should establish approximately six months of expert consultant services per year to aid the Steering Committee and the Focal Point for Women to properly implement the action programme by monitoring progress, analyzing problems, and proposing new approaches to advance women's status.

164. The long-standing absence of a career development system within the Secretariat has been a particular obstacle to women attempting to "catch up" with men. The action programmes originally intended to establish steering committees at major duty stations, and women's focal points in departments and offices and duty stations worldwide. However, these arrangements appear to have fallen into disrepair. A part-time focal point was just re-established for the many women staff in Geneva after several years of inactivity, and a list of Secretariat-wide "focal points" provided to the Inspector was very incomplete and seems out-of-date. Particularly since the establishment of a career development system continues to make such painfully slow progress in the United Nations, a network of focal points and steering committees seems urgently needed to assist and inform women Secretariat-wide.

**Step 4**. The Focal Point for Women in New York should reestablish (or establish) the worldwide network of women's focal points in Secretariat departments, offices, and duty stations, and where possible Steering Committees. This should include a system to keep these people informed of developments and opportunities affecting women, and solicit their input, ideas, and monitoring information on problems encountered and progress being made.

165. General Assembly resolution 48/218 calls for the establishment of a transparent and effective system of accountability and responsibility throughout the Secretariat by January 1995, including "a mechanism ensuring that programme managers are accountable for effective management of the personnel and financial resources allocated

to them".[124] In addition, the Secretary-General's reports[125] and a 1986 General Assembly resolution[126] have emphasized that managers will be held accountable, and will be evaluated, for their performance in meeting staffing targets and advancing the status of their women staff. These policies need now, finally and urgently, to be visibly implemented. Reviews and followup of this performance and subsequent actions taken should be carried out not only by OHRM and the Steering Committee, but also by internal and external oversight mechanisms.

> **Step 5.** Managers of departments and offices should be held fully responsible and accountable for attaining targets and implementing policies of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General concerning women's status, as an integral part of the new accountability and responsibility system. Their performance should be regularly (if summarily) assessed in published reports on women's status, in internal reporting to the managerial hierarchy, and periodically by internal and external oversight units. In each of these accountability processes, problems and successes should be identified, corrective actions taken, and performance recognition or sanctions applied, as called for in the past but never implemented.

166. For more than two decades, the concerns and prospects of women in the General Service category have been occasionally mentioned, and the Steering Committee has put forth significant proposals which the Secretary-General largely accepted. But the more than 4,500 General Service women in the Secretariat continue to be ignored. Recently, agreement was reached on an exploratory study in this area, but like so many other efforts, nothing further has happened. This continuing lack of attention and analysis greatly hampers the contribution which this large and essential group of Secretariat staff can and should make.

> **Step 6.** The proposed consultant study for the secretarial occupation, initiated by the staff and discussed with the Secretary-General and OHRM, should be carried out immediately. This should be only the first of an ongoing set of studies to analyze neglected problems (such as career paths, occupational training, recruitment standards, job design, and examination opportunities), and to improve the situations and prospects of the vast majority of Secretariat women who serve in the General Service category.

167. The General Assembly has recently requested that an equal employment opportunity programme be incorporated in OHRM, with procedures to ensure that "opportunities for staff selection and advancement are extended on the basis of merit, efficiency, competence and integrity and do not discriminate against staff of either gender".[127] Such an organizational climate of gender equity/gender blindness would ensure women equal access to opportunities in the Secretariat, rather than the prevailing favoritism to men's career needs emphasized by the Secretary-General's first action programme report in 1985.[128] Unfortunately, current statistics on women's status and advancement suggest that this "old boy" network is still dominant. Special measures have been established to ensure that women receive these opportunities, but it is not at all clear that they are being applied and enforced.

**Step 7**. In all recruitment, placement, and promotion actions, OHRM should be required to certify that procedures established to help ensure women equal access have been followed, based on a documented summary of the specific steps taken. These certifications should be available for review by the monitoring and internal and external oversight units cited above.

168. Secretariat recruitment during the past decade has been much reduced because of financial and restructuring constraints. But talented people are now scattered worldwide in the new global labor market (a recent press report observed, for instance, that about 100,000 skilled Africans now work in Europe and North America). These people can now be reached much more widely, quickly and cheaply in other ways than the cumbersome and costly Secretariat recruiting missions and journal advertisements of the past.[129] Global computer networks, particularly the Internet with 20,000,000 people already participating and a very rapid month-by-month growth rate, can easily reach specific professional occupational groups and specialists around the world, including a steadily increasing number of women, through vacancy announcements on specialized electronic "bulletin boards". In addition, management consultant and accountancy firms[130] and non-governmental development organizations (NGOs)[131] found all over the world can also provide skilled and experienced men and women who are well suited to fill critical United Nations staffing needs.

**Step 8**. The expert consultants called for in step 3 should help OHRM identify new, much more cost-effective ways to reach highly-qualified women from all countries who are increasingly available in the new global labor markets.

169. Member States can contribute greatly to this new, results-oriented action programme by also acting firmly to support and implement applicable General Assembly resolutions, particularly the Assembly's request in 1990 that they nominate, encourage, and identify more women candidates, especially for senior policy-level posts.[132] For instance, if the 76 Member States that had no women professional staff in mid-1993 could each find just one highly-qualified woman for recruitment in the next year - certainly achievable - it would not only greatly enhance gender geographical distribution but could finally push the overall proportion of women professionals over the 35 percent target by 1995. Second, as the 1977 UNITAR colloquium observed, advancement of women in the Secretariat and through United Nations programmes worldwide can only really occur when women are fully integrated into the international decision-making process, which begins with Member States in New York.[133]

**Step 9**. Member States could contribute greatly to truly effective women's programmes in and through the United Nations by always submitting at least one and preferably 50 percent women in their lists of candidates for posts, and by working with the Secretariat to reestablish statistics on proportions of women in their Permanent Missions and delegations to the United Nations and to actively increase these numbers.

170. Finally, the Secretariat organizational climate and attitudes, which the 1985 action programme noted as being of fundamental importance to improving women's status,[134] still need to be fully explored and improved. Continuing attention must be given by top management, the Steering Committee, regular reports on women's status, and the action programme to (a) unaddressed training and workplace issues, (b) relevant actions

underway in such United Nations activities as the Commission on the Status of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women, and (c) new Secretariat activities in which women's roles and concerns need to be carefully considered. The Inspector agrees fully with the General Assembly's observation that such efforts and policies "contribute to attracting and retaining the most qualified staff."[135]

**Step 10**. The new programme should renew attention to training for as many staff as possible in diversity/gender issues, to progress on workplace/family-related issues and assurance that the new guidance on sexual harassment will set a credible example of fair and equitable treatment for all, to initiatives concerning women in other parts of the United Nations, and to new issues such as the problems encountered by women in the challenging peacekeeping and peace-making operations increasingly undertaken by the Secretariat.

## ANNEX

## THE HISTORICAL RECORD OF WOMEN'S STATUS AND ADVANCEMENT IN THE SECRETARIAT

171. The very first sentence of the United Nations Charter of 1945 states, in part, "We the peoples of the United Nations determined...to reaffirm faith in ... the equal rights of men and women ...". Article 8 of the Charter also states explicitly that "The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs."

172. Progress toward ensuring these equal rights within the Secretariat itself over the past fifty years, however, has been painfully slow. Over and over again, strong policy statements have been followed by apathetic actions. The Inspector regrets repeating this tedious history. However, this brief review allows an understanding of these seemingly endless cycles of failed implementation. It also introduces highly relevant past policy ideas which have never been acted upon.

173. Initial efforts seemed promising. The Commission on the Status of Women was established in 1946 to initiate and monitor human rights issues of special concern to women. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 was proclaimed and adopted to apply to "everyone...without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex...".

174. The United Nations and the International Labour Organisation adopted Conventions during the 1950s on equal pay for equal work, political rights of women, elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation, and workers with family responsibilities. A convention on discrimination against women was also launched (however, it then took 25 long years of effort to finally adopt it).[136]

175. Despite these significant policy developments, women's advancement in the Secretariat was scarcely noticeable during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. In 1971 the Secretary-General reported for the first time on the number of women by level in the Secretariat (only 17 percent of professional staff in posts subject to geographical distribution were women, and a mere 2.6 percent of staff at Director levels or above were women).[137] Formal and informal staff groups urged much more decisive action, and a 1972 UNITAR colloquium produced a comprehensive set of recommended actions to remove discrimination and provide equal opportunities for women.[138]

176. The 1970s and early 1980s were marked by many detailed and increasingly urgent General Assembly resolutions concerning the advancement of women in the Secretariat. A first resolution in 1970 expressed the hope that the Secretariat and the system would set an example in providing opportunities to women at senior and other professional staff levels. Subsequent resolutions highlighted the need for:

(a) high-level leadership, interagency co-operation, and Member State co-operation to advance women's status;

(b) increased proportions of women at senior and policymaking levels, in professional posts overall, and in departments:

(c) a review of the status of women in the General Service and related categories;

(d) publicity campaigns, recruitment missions, representative rosters, women on personnel boards, and monitoring of promotion procedures to facilitate women's recruitment and advancement; and

(e) action in important related areas such as assignments of married couples, maternity leave, flexible work schedules, and the elimination of prejudices, sexual harassment and other discriminatory treatment.[139]

177. Again, however, little improvement could be noticed. A second UNITAR colloquium in 1977 observed that full integration of women into international decision-making was critical to improving the lot of women worldwide. But in spite of all the efforts made, the percentage of Secretariat women professionals and above had scarcely changed. There were very few women in senior posts at headquarters and in the field, and the number of women in General Assembly delegations and Permanent Missions in New York had risen only slightly (to 9 and 12 percent respectively in 1976-1977). The Colloquium proposed a careful and extensive set of action recommendations to allow the United Nations to seriously address the equality of men and women and provide international leadership in this area.[140]

178. In 1977 a second Secretary-General issued guidance to achieve the equality of men and women in the Secretariat. He cited General Assembly resolutions calling for increased employment of women and setting 1980 as a goal for achievement of an "equitable balance" of men and women in the Secretariat. The guidance established firm policies and administrative measures to achieve equal opportunity and treatment. It concluded with the hope that this effort would steadily increase the number of women throughout the organization, demonstrate the Secretariat's commitment to equality, and prove Secretariat efficacy.[141]

179. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, a third wave of General Assembly resolutions finally allowed women's issues to break out of their narrow human rights focus to include all types of fundamental women's issues. The International Women's Year of 1975 and the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) built momentum and led to the creation of many new United Nations system institutions and programmes for the advancement of women. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women finally entered into force in 1981: today more than 125 Member States have ratified this Convention. Perhaps most importantly, the World Conference to review the Decade for Women in Nairobi in 1985 led to "forward-looking strategies", system-wide plans for women and development, and a systematic effort to firmly assess progress and pursue strategies for the advancement of women up to the year 2000.[142]

180. Meanwhile, however, advancement of women in the Secretariat went essentially nowhere. JIU progress reports on the advancement of women in 1980 and 1982 found little substantive change from a first JIU status report in 1977.[143] Concerned by this lack of progress and failure to achieve a 25 percent target proportion of women that had been set for 1982, ECOSOC called on the Secretary-General in 1984 to implement the relevant recommendations of the General Assembly and the JIU.[144]

181. In an extensive 1985 report, a third Secretary-General addressed women's issues.[145] He began by observing that the United Nations could not help to build

women's participation in worldwide political, economic and social development (as stressed by the just-concluded world conference to review the United Nations Decade for Women) when women in the United Nations Secretariat still "rarely participate" in the organization's activities and technical co-operation programmes.

182. The report noted that the 23 percent of women in posts subject to geographical distribution in mid-1985 still fell short of the General Assembly's target of 25 percent by 1982, and that recent recruitment percentages (only 16-19 percent women) had actually been insufficient to maintain even this level. Furthermore, women were concentrated at lower levels (P-1 to P-3), and in "service-oriented" rather than "substantive" occupations. There were severe disparities in women's distribution across departments and in regional commissions, and by region of origin. Further, "many activities" had no targets for women's employment: technical co-operation in particular was "virtually without women at any level." And dry statistics could "not describe the attitudinal problems" affecting the working atmosphere in the Secretariat, especially for women in the General Service and related categories.

183. To deal with these problems, the Secretary-General established an action programme and work plans which would "aim at the creation of a framework for the advancement of women...". The action programme concentrated on attitudinal changes, management commitment, and accountability to overcome remaining obstacles. The action programme and associated work plans covered five areas: recruitment; career development; training; work/family-related issues; and systems to redress grievances. The Secretary-General appointed a temporary Coordinator (an Assistant Secretary-General) with four staff to initiate the programme, plus a high-level Steering Committee: the staff was later reduced to a single Focal Point (Director, D-1, extrabudgetary) in OHRM with one assistant.[146]

184. Five years later, however, the implementation process had foundered once again. General Assembly resolutions in 1990 and 1991 noted with concern that a target of 30 percent women in posts subject to geographical distribution which it had established in 1985 had not been achieved, and that the small number of women in senior posts had actually declined. The Assembly resolutions established new targets of 35 percent overall participation and 25 percent for senior posts (D-1 and above) by 1995.[147]

185. These Assembly resolutions also called for a new action programme for the advancement of women for 1991-1995, to include unfulfilled parts of the 1985-1990 programme. They stated that the programme should continue to seek attitudinal changes and management commitment, provide (again) a comprehensive analysis of main obstacles, and ensure adequate machinery to implement a detailed programme of activities, including monitoring and timetables for their completion.

186. Thus, after more than 40 years of effort to meet its Charter obligations under Article 8, and after 20 years of detailed General Assembly resolutions calling for specific actions to achieve equal treatment of men and women in the Secretariat, the United Nations had become all too aware of the problem, but not really much closer to solving it. From a proportion of about 17 percent women in professional posts subject to geographical distribution in 1971, the Secretariat had struggled to reach a proportion of about 32 percent women in late 1993, a very modest and unsatisfying result.

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